

GOD'S CALL

Major themes in the Scriptures

The Holy Spirit (10)

Walking by the Spirit: meaning

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The Lord willing, today we will consider the subject, “The Holy Spirit”, the tenth message, in seeking to appreciate major themes in the Scriptures.

A short summary of today's message:

God gives us the Holy Spirit to enable us to develop the highest quality in our moral and spiritual being: the fruit of the Spirit. In order to do that to the fullest extent, we must learn to walk by the Spirit. Why must this be so?

We will seek the Lord to appreciate more of what this means.

In the last message, we saw that the critical issue that will determine the quality of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives is the depth and the intensity of our love for God in His being and in His will, such that all that we want is to be like Him and to do His will because that is good and right, and it is the most meaningful path for us.

God wants us to develop the fruit of the Spirit, a moral character that is like His. How then does walking by the Spirit help us develop the fullest extent of this quality?

There is a very direct relationship between the fruit of the Spirit and walking by the Spirit.

In terms of the meaning that comes through to us, the fruit of the Spirit describes the moral character that is good, basically the moral perfection of God. What is mentioned in **Galatians 5** is not a complete list but an expression of the qualities of moral goodness, and found in perfection in the being of God.

So the fruit of the Spirit has to do with character, is similar to Christ being formed in us: the character of Christ being formed in us.

Walking by the Spirit has to do with our specific day to day, event by event, choice: every choice that we make - whether we will live according to the will of God by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, by His power; or we will walk in our own way.

At the heart of developing the fruit of the Spirit is the attitude that we take, what we want in life. We have seen in the last message that if we are to develop the fruit of the Spirit, there must be a deep and intense love for God and His ways. Without that, we cannot properly develop that.

However, in terms of development of that character of God, there is a need for us to be conscious of the whole direction that we have chosen, so that the choices that we make will be consistent with that and will intensify and build that direction of life.

This path is extremely difficult and yet, it is the most wonderful path that we can ever take and it is what God intends for us. And we can experience it, we can know it, but we need to understand how we can effectively live in this way.

The apostle Paul wrote the epistle to the Galatians in which the issue of the flesh and the Spirit is considered at length.

And this subject is very, very important because the flesh works against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. If we are to learn to develop the fruit of the Spirit, if we are to learn to walk by the Spirit, then we need to understand the relationship between the flesh and the Spirit.

Let us turn to **Galatians 5: 13-26**.

Galatians 5: 13-26

- 13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.
- 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."
- 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.
- 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.
- 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.
- 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.
- 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,
- 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,
- 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
- 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
- 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.
- 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.
- 26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

If we look at the passage carefully, we will realize that the apostle Paul refers to the flesh and the Spirit again and again and again. And he alternates the two. He talks about the flesh; he talks about the Spirit. He talks about the flesh again; he talks about the Spirit. He talks about the flesh again; he talks about the Spirit. Why is that so?

It is because that is where the conflict is. If we want to develop quality in our being, we must understand the conflict and deal with it right at its roots, so that we can live well.

The apostle Paul says: "For you were called to freedom, brethren". This is God's call. God wants to call us towards a life of true freedom, a very, very meaningful life where we need not be bound by rules and regulations and many things that weigh us down. He wants us to be truly free. The Lord Jesus Christ has called us to freedom, but it is so very easy to abuse the freedom that God wants to give to us. And so he says: "...only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh...".

We can change what God gives to us or what God intends to give to us very readily, to something negative. This takes place so very readily. God wants to give us the very best, but we can substitute that because something else is attractive to us.

So we say we have freedom, but freedom for what?

Freedom becomes licence when we seek to do the things we please not according to what is good. Freedom is meant to be exercised in the context of the moral perfection of God. That is the context in which we will know true freedom. Outside of that, it will be slavery.

So for example, many people think that they have freedom because they could do whatever they liked. Whatever they wished, they could just do. That is freedom.

But in reality, that is slavery: we are enslaved to the desires of the flesh, to the inclinations of the natural body.

True freedom works within the context, the framework, of moral perfection, and it is a life that is truly meaningful. But it is difficult to live like that because of the workings of the flesh.

“...do not *turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another”. In our relationships with one another, when we want to exercise freedom, we think of freedom for ourselves, but not freedom for other people. And so, the result is an opportunity for the flesh. We exert our freedom without regard to what it means for other people. We want our freedom.

So what is the answer to that?

The apostle Paul says: “...through love serve one another”. There is a consciousness of the direction – our freedom is meant to be expressed in something positive, something good, for the well-being of other people: love, serving one another.

For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." As you pause and consider, you may wonder: Why is it the apostle Paul says: “...the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."? Isn't that incomplete? Isn't that the second great commandment?"

We recall how the Pharisees came to the Lord Jesus and one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question to test Him. And he said, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' "This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

We read that in **Matthew 22**.

So why is it the apostle Paul did not refer to **the great and foremost commandment**: to **LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND?**

As far as I can see, basically it is not that the apostle Paul was not conscious of this **great and foremost commandment**. That is very, very much always in his heart. However, in this context, he was addressing the issue of relationship between people: our relationship with our neighbour, our relationship with our fellow men. What kind of relationship should it be? What does God require of us in the way we relate with other people?

He says: "...the whole Law is fulfilled in one word". What God requires of us in our relationship with other people is: "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." That is the way we should relate with others. So "the whole Law" here is meant to indicate the whole Law in relation to our relationship with other people.

At the same time, we can also consider that in reality, if we know how to love our neighbour as ourselves, we would also have fulfilled **the great and foremost commandment**.

That is because we cannot properly love our neighbour as ourselves unless we first truly love God and there is His love in our hearts, we understand His ways, and God's life and God's love motivate us, lead us.

It is in that situation that we can properly love our neighbours as we should.

Otherwise, the kind of love that we show towards our neighbour will still be tinged, tainted, corrupted, by selfishness on our part: We love others because of what we can get in return; we love with various other motives within our hearts.

To love in the right way, to love in a pure way, it must come from a true love for God and resulting from that, the love of God filling our hearts, enabling us to love others.

So he talks about what is good and ought to be. Then he goes on to say: "But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another." So he again and again warns us that it is so easy to live by the flesh. We should do what is right but often we do not.

When we look at **verse 17**, we may wonder: What does this mean? The apostle Paul says: "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please."

Here, the apostle Paul tells us that there is a conflict, a very serious conflict in the life of a Christian.

A Christian has basically come before God in repentance, sought God's forgiveness, acknowledged his needs and has received the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour and been born of the Spirit. So he would want to walk in the ways of God, but he finds that there is an opposition to this path.

And this is a constant, severe conflict in the experience of Christians in general.

Why is there this conflict? He says: "...the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another".

We have seen that in the context of **Galatians**, the apostle Paul refers to the flesh again and again and the meaning here basically refers to man seeking to live his life independent of God by his own natural abilities and powers, not in submission to God's ways, not in dependence on God's life and power, and very much based on the inclinations of this natural body. And in such a situation, he is very much subjected to the influence of the evil one.

So the Christian longs to be good, he wants to serve God. Yet he finds within himself very readily, the inclination towards that which is not good and often, he gives in to that. A life that is not given to God, any element of selfishness on our part, self-centredness, self-seeking, will lead to this weakness, will lead to this conflict, will lead to this problem. The apostle Paul described this in **Romans 7: 21-25**.

Romans 7: 21-25

- 21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.
- 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,
- 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.
- 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?
- 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

This is a conflict that a Christian experiences when he wants to do good, he wants to be what God wants him to be, but he finds it very, very difficult; he keeps failing. There is "the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good."

He says: "...I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man". In his spirit, he recognizes what is right, he wants to choose this path and walk in it. But he says: "There is a different law in the members of my body". This natural body has an inclination in the direction that is not for our well-being.

“...waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members”. So he finds that it is a very wretched state and he cries out, “Who will set me free from the body of this death (or “...from this body of death”)?”

So when we choose to go our own way, when we do not depend on God for His life and power, then even when we want to do good, even when we seek to be good, we will find that there is this failure again and again: We cannot live the life of righteousness.

How can this problem be resolved?

We see the apostle Paul gives the answer in **Galatians 5: 16 and 18**. **Verse 17** talks about the conflict but **verses 16 and 18** tell us the solution – what is the answer to this.

Verse 16: But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Verse 18: But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

So there is this conflict. If we are to win in this conflict, if we are to be victorious, to overcome then we must walk by the Spirit. Then we will not carry out the desire of the flesh. “...walk by the Spirit” in its essence, in its meaning, is similar to being “led by the Spirit”. When you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

Here, “under the Law” in the context of **Galatians**, the apostle Paul speaks very much about the requirements of the Law which, in the Old Testament times, the Jews were required to keep various ceremonial laws; but these laws were no longer required in the New Testament. For all those who belong to Christ, the ceremonial laws have been fulfilled; but the moral law continues and we are to fulfil the requirements of the moral law.

Why was the apostle Paul so concerned about the Galatians?

What was it that was wrong with them? If we look at the context, initially it may be a bit difficult for us to understand why he was so concerned and why is it that the response of the Galatians in that way would lead to a life of the flesh that is described by **verses 19 to 21**, a list of very negative manifestations in living according to the flesh.

So let us look at **Galatians 3** where the apostle Paul in **verse 3** says: "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

He says: "You began by the Spirit. Why are you now seeking to be perfected by the flesh?" What was the context?

The context was: The apostle Paul had preached to them, they had repented, they had trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, they had found forgiveness; they experienced the power of the Holy Spirit, they were free to live for God; but then, they were influenced by the Jews who emphasized the need to keep the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament and in particular, circumcision, but not only that, various other laws that they were called upon to keep.

And so in **chapter 4 verse 10**, the apostle Paul said: "You observe days and months and seasons and years." And **verse 11**: "I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain."

So they were seeking to keep the ceremonial laws: circumcision, observing days and months and years.

Then we may wonder: What is so bad about that? They just want to keep some days; they want just to perform certain of these rites. Why is that so serious?

There are two aspects why it is so serious.

One is that these ceremonial laws cannot save us. They were meant to lead us to Christ, help us understand what He was going to do on the cross. So the shadow cannot be a substitute for the substance. Christ is the substance. These ceremonial laws were the shadow to point towards what He would do. But by following this, when Christ has come to fulfil all this, they were following the shadow, which would in fact mean that they would be rejecting the substance. And therefore, he told them: "If you do that, Christ will be of no benefit to you... you have fallen from grace."

In addition to that, they were then depending on the works of the flesh in order to be justified. By keeping these laws, by doing these things they hoped that they would become acceptable to God. But that is something not possible. We can never be acceptable to God by doing things that we can by ourselves without the power of God.

The underlying principle of seeking to be justified by the flesh will affect the whole way we live, in everything that we do. When we do not live by the power of God, it means we live by our natural power; and in our natural power, there is no spiritual life. So our natural power will be related to and based upon self-centred desires.

The Lord Jesus says, "You have no life in yourself". So without spiritual life from God, we will be walking in spiritual death.

And so, **Galatians 5** tells us the works of the flesh: they are so negative; it is because they arise from the self-centred life in association with the inclinations of the natural body.

Sometimes, the works of the flesh may not appear very negative. They may even appear very good.

People can do many “good” things: they can appear very helpful, they can say many “right” things; and yet, because it is the flesh, it does not arise from the fellowship with God and the dependence on God; there is not that life of God – the outcome is spiritual death. Underlying it, there are ulterior motives: there are aspects that are not right and not good – a desire for honour, a desire to obtain something that we want, but we present what is acceptable.

So once we do not live by the power of God, then all these problems will come about. And so, the deeds of the flesh are evident...: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these ... These are the things that will manifest when we do not live by the power of God, when we do not walk by the Spirit.

So the apostle Paul says: “...walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.” That means it is possible to overcome. It is possible not to live by the flesh. It is possible for us to live a life of true freedom in the Lord.

And again in **verse 18** he says: “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.”

So he talks about walking by the Spirit, and then he says: “For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit” .

He tells us that is the conflict, but in the conflict, we can overcome.

Then he goes on to tell us what are the deeds of the flesh, so that we can see how negative they are.

And then he tells us the fruit of the Spirit, how beautiful that is.

And then he goes on to tell us: "...those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

So there is a solution: If we belong to Christ, then we have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Doesn't that seem to mean if we belong to Christ then we are free from the passions and desires of the flesh? But then in reality, in Christian experience, it is not so. Why?

Verse 25, he says: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."

So again, it comes back to this. We must walk by the Spirit. So what does that mean, how does it work?

And he ends the chapter by saying, "Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another."

This whole passage may seem rather discouraging. But it is very important because it helps us to recognize reality.

Reality is like that: It is very easy to walk in the flesh. It is very difficult to walk by the Spirit, but it is possible and we ought to, and God wants us to do so. And it will be a wonderful life when we do that.

So that is what God offers to us: Walk by the Spirit.

But will we do that?

There must be a proper basis by which we can overcome and walk by the Spirit. How does that work?

We have seen that the Holy Spirit works on the basis of what the Lord Jesus has done.

So in order to understand how He works, how we can properly walk by the Spirit, we must appreciate what the Lord Jesus has done. It is based on that.

If we do not have the Lord Jesus as our Saviour and if we do not depend on Him in terms of the meaning of the cross, then we will not be able to live by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Here, I am not saying that a person must always understand all the aspects of the meaning of the cross, but I am referring to the reality of it: that whatever we can accomplish in terms of meaning in life has to be based on what the Lord Jesus has done for us.

The reason is simple. And that is: we have failed; we have gone our own way; we are under condemnation; we need forgiveness. Only through Christ can we find forgiveness: so it has to be through Him.

But it is possible for people, who have not yet come to recognize specifically what the Lord Jesus has done – in situations where they are not aware, or in the Old Testament times – for them to be able to benefit from what the Lord Jesus has done on the cross because in their hearts they are repentant, they come to God for forgiveness. And God can forgive them, and will forgive them, on the basis of the cross.

Likewise, we can overcome by the power of God, by the life of God because the Lord Jesus overcame sin on the cross. The Lord Jesus Christ is God become man. He lived in this world in a body like ours; He overcame sin in all its forms.

And when we learn to receive His life, to abide in Him, to be united with Him we will know that power to overcome sin. And this is applied to us by the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

As we learn to walk by the Spirit, the realities of what the Lord Jesus has done on the cross will come alive in us and we will be able to find that freedom.

That is why again and again, the principle “walk by the Spirit”, “led by the Spirit”, “walk according to the Spirit” comes through in the issue of dealing with sin and the flesh, and to live a life of righteousness.

Romans 6: 5-7

- 5 For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection,
- 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;
- 7 for he who has died is freed from sin.

The term “old self” can also be literally translated as “old man”:
“...our old **man** was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin”.

The “old man” refers to what we were: the way we lived our lives without God, the way we walked according to the inclinations of the natural body.

The Lord Jesus Christ on the cross dealt with the principle of the “old man”. He faced all the temptations that this body could generate under the influence of the evil one in the context of this world and He overcame. He did not sin. He lived His perfect life by the power of the Holy Spirit and He overcame perfectly.

Now we in Him can also overcome perfectly.

“...our old **man** was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with (or “rendered powerless, inoperative”), so that we can be free and we would no longer be slaves to sin”.

However, we know that although this is true (the Lord Jesus has died on the cross, He has dealt with sin), yet the common experience in Christian lives is: we constantly still experience the power of sin and we constantly fail.

That is why we need to learn to walk by the Spirit, to apply the realities of the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ in our daily lives.

Galatians 5: 24

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

So in this passage of dealing with the flesh, walking by the Spirit, the apostle Paul tells us: "...those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." So there is a reality there: that in the spiritual realm, when we are united with the Lord Jesus Christ, there is that oneness with Him whereby the power of the flesh can be effectively dealt with.

However, the practical realities in terms of its application in our lives can only come about when we have deliberately chosen the path of holiness in union with the Lord Jesus and totally reject the way of the flesh.

We all know that when we repent, we become Christians, as a general rule, our repentance is not very, very deep. We recognize, yes, we have sinned. We know we have gone the wrong way, we come to God for forgiveness; we want to do what is right. But is it very deep, is it total? Have we really given up whatever is of the flesh, whatever is sinful? Generally speaking, that is not so.

But God is prepared to forgive us. When there is a sincere repentance, when there is a genuine desire to turn away from sin, God is prepared to forgive us on the basis of the cross.

But that does not mean that our self-life, our walking in the flesh, is properly dealt with. There is still very much of this in our lives and it continues in many Christian lives.

And sometimes, and more than sometimes, it becomes worse and worse because we become complacent. We think we are forgiven, we are going to heaven; we become careless and so we degenerate. And this is very common and dangerous.

Having become Christians, we must deepen. We must continue to recognize the seriousness of sin and to know what it means to reject it absolutely and totally. It is then that we can find true freedom.

And so in **Romans 6: 12**, the apostle Paul says:

Romans 6: 12

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts...

He is telling Christians who have found forgiveness, who have been crucified with Christ; he says: "Therefore, because of what the Lord Jesus has done and you now belong to Him, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts..."

These desires of the flesh are very strong. It is very easy for you to obey its lusts or its desires and therefore, we have to be very specific, definite and resolute: "...do not let sin reign".

It is a choice that we must make consistently and with determination.

In terms of the practical living out, it is not just that you determine: “I will not let sin reign in my mortal body; I will not obey its lusts” and then, you find freedom. It is not that way because that will still be

Romans 7.

It is the Holy Spirit who will enable us to find the spiritual freedom through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 8: 1-4

- 1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.
- 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,
- 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

So here again, the apostle Paul speaks of walking by the Spirit, the meaning of it. He says: “...the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death”. If we live by the law of the Spirit of life, it means that this is operating in us constantly – we are walking by the Spirit. And if we do that, we will find that freedom from the law of sin and of death.

The path of the flesh leads to sin and death. The path of walking by the Spirit leads to life and freedom. So that is the way in which we can find freedom.

So the basis is that we, through the flesh, cannot fulfil the requirement of the Law. God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin (or concerning sin), He condemned sin in the flesh. So the Lord Jesus dealt with sin by coming into this world in the likeness of sinful flesh. He dwelt in a body like ours. He experienced the temptations, the pressures, the difficulties; He overcame.

And He condemned sin in the flesh, meaning, He overcame it, He showed that it cannot overcome Him and we in Him can find the freedom.

“...so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Here, “the requirement of the Law” refers basically to the moral law, what God requires of us, the moral meaning and direction.

All this will be fulfilled when we do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit: It is as we walk by the Spirit, we walk according to the Spirit, that we would in reality fulfil the requirement of the Law.

It is important for us to recognize our approach in the Christian life is not to try to keep many regulations in the hope that by so doing we can fulfil God’s requirements.

Of course, we must obey God, we must keep His law. But the approach is not to concentrate on keeping the laws of various things that we think are good and we ought to do. For example: “We must make sure we attend every prayer meeting, every worship service, read the Bible every day.” And we think that if we do that, God will accept us, it will be all right. But that is not true.

We can attend all these meetings, we can read the bible regularly and yet, your life can be very weak and constantly failing in the moral realm because ultimately, it is not these outward activities and forms that are meaningful. It is the character and the direction, the meaning that comes with life, and that life can come about only through the Holy Spirit given to us. We must receive the life of God; we must live by that.

Then of course, it is very easy for us to say, “Yes, I live by the power of the Holy Spirit. I do not need to read the Bible, I do not need to attend meetings, because I live by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

And that is what often happens: God calls us to freedom but we turn the freedom to an opportunity for the flesh.

If we truly love God, if we receive the life of God, we want to live to honour God: We will recognize that these are important, we will give priority to these things because they are important but we do not base our lives on these things.

We love God; we do this because we love Him, because they are good, they are important, they are helpful; so we work at it on that basis.

Romans 8: 12-14

- 12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh--
- 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.
- 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

So again, he tells us the importance of being led by the Spirit. And, by the Spirit we are to put to death the deeds of the body; then we will live. So it is very easy for us to move according to the flesh. It is very easy for us to fail to do what is right.

Why did the apostle Paul spend time to talk about relationship amongst people?

One of the reasons is that we can say, “I have kept the great and foremost commandment. I love God with all my heart.” But then, the way we treat our neighbours – we are selfish, we are inconsiderate, we are unkind; and we say we love God with all our heart. It cannot be true.

If we truly love God with all our heart, it will be manifested in the attitude, the manner in which we live our lives in relationship with people because we are living in this world and this is a context for us to manifest the character of God.

But remember that in order to properly love our neighbours, we must relate with God in the right way. We must properly love Him, we must receive His life, we must know His power then we can properly relate with others. The issue is very important for us to appreciate properly in terms of the sequence, the approach.

So by the Spirit, we are to put to death the practices of the body.

I want to go back to **Galatians 5** and consider the meaning of walking by the Spirit: What was the apostle Paul referring to and how does it work?

Galatians 5: 16, the apostle Paul says: “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

In **Galatians 5: 25**, he says: “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.”

From what I can understand, the word that is translated as “walk” is not the same Greek word in **verse 16** and **verse 25**. There are two different words used but both can be translated as “walk” and both are important and meaningful. I think it is helpful for us to appreciate this. The apostle Paul has his reason for choosing two different words.

In **Galatians 5: 16**, “walk by the Spirit”, the word “walk” is from the Greek word “*peripateo*”; “*peripateo*” basically means “to walk about”, or “to follow as a companion”, or generally, “to live” – live your life, how you conduct yourself.

So to walk by the Spirit would mean that we are to walk together with the Holy Spirit; we are to follow Him and we are to live our lives with Him, by His power.

“...by the Spirit” basically comes from the word “*pneumati*”, which can be translated as “by the Spirit”, “with the Spirit”, or “in the Spirit”. So here, it is translated as “by the Spirit”, which is appropriate.

But we can also appreciate the other meanings as also being relevant: “by the Spirit”, “in the Spirit”, “with the Spirit”. So we are to walk by the Spirit, with the Spirit, in the Spirit. That is to say: the way we live our lives, it must be in association with the life and power of the Holy Spirit in every aspect, that is, we walk with Him, we follow Him, we accompany Him, we listen to Him; He guides us, He empowers us; we live by His power and we live in the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit.

All these are meaningful aspects in terms of the whole direction of our lives.

So, if we live our lives in that way, in the whole direction of the life of the Spirit, then we will not fulfil the desire of the flesh.

In verse 25, the word translated as “walk” is from the Greek word, “*stoicheo*”; “*stoicheo*” – it basically refers to marching in rank, or keeping step, conforming, or walking orderly.

So it refers to a military context where people march in step. You must keep in step, move together and every step that you take must be together. Anyone who moves out of step in a military march is very obvious. It is easy for us to detect that.

So if we are to walk by the Spirit, we must keep in step with the Holy Spirit; we must move together with Him.

There is such unison that the life of God, the meaning of God's purposes will come through effectively. That is to say: We do not move according to our own natural thinking, our own natural desires but we move together with the Spirit. We look to Him, we seek His guidance, we pray, and as He leads, as we recognize what is meaningful to God, we move together with Him. There is a union, there is a fellowship; there is a moving together.

And all this is constantly in the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit. That is why the baptism with the Holy Spirit is very important and must be continued throughout our lives in terms of the reality. We live in the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit dwells in us; He becomes imparted into our being; we are transformed, so that the life of God becomes part of our character, our being.

So **verse 25** says: If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Why does he refer to two different things: "live by the Spirit", "walk by the Spirit" and he uses the word "also"?

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. From the context, I see it is appropriate to view it as: "live by the Spirit" is a general description. We live by the Spirit: that means the whole direction our lives; our attitudes, our values, what we want to do, what we want to be, we live by the Spirit. That is our commitment; that is our value system; that is the way we want to live each day.

So if that is so, if we have committed ourselves to live that way, then let us also walk by the Spirit: Every step that we take, do so in unison with the Holy Spirit; everything that we do, do so in fellowship with Him.

So this refers to the whole direction of our lives as well as every step that we take.

In the **Psalms**, the psalmist could appreciate an aspect of this when he said: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

“A lamp to my feet” shows the way for the next step for me to take.

“A light to my path” points the whole direction of my goal, my destination, the way I should live.

So our lives should be lived that way. We should have a proper direction, a proper goal. We know the goal in God, in His will, in His purposes, in His being: that is our goal, the whole direction. We live by the Spirit, to move in that direction. That is a commitment. That is why there must be the intense love for God, His being, His ways.

Then we need to have the lamp to our feet so that we can see the next step. Sometimes we think we know the way, but we are careless, we are not so prayerful, and so we fall into a ditch.

We can be looking at the distance, that is right, but the way to move to that goal does not mean that we do not move around the obstacles. We still have to see the next step – where we need to take the step. You may have a compass, you want to go north, but it does not mean that you just move north, whatever is in front of you. You sometimes have to turn around, move somewhere else; come back again.

The direction is set but you need to know the guidance of the Holy Spirit in every aspect of your life. So if we are presumptuous, we think we know, we are not prayerful, we can easily fall into a ditch. We can go astray; we can do things that are displeasing to God.

So then, how does this relate with fruit of the Spirit?

Basically, we must first settle our hearts: Our primary choice is to give our lives fully to God whatever happens – our life is given such that our whole heart belongs to Him. That is a settled choice on our part: to give ourselves fully to Him, to live on the basis of what is morally good and perfect.

Then, every choice that we make, in every situation of life, must be consistent with this primary choice: all these secondary choices that we make, in every situation, must be consistent with that.

If we do that, then the primary choice will be strengthened. It will go deeper and deeper.

So we may have developed some degree of the fruit of the Spirit. There is character formed in us that is good, positive, meaningful, but not good enough, not deep enough. Or even if it is very good, there is still more and more to develop.

So how do you do that? Walking by the Spirit... every step that we take, everything that we recognize is meaningful to God, we make sure we abide by that, we live by that.

Sometimes, we may think, "I work so hard. I have lived for God so much. Let me take a rest. Just relax for a while."

What will happen when you do that?

You degenerate straightaway.

There is no such thing as taking a rest from walking by the Spirit.

There is no such thing as taking a break from a life of holiness.

We must recognize this. Do we want it? Do we want it all the way – everything, whatever it is?

If we do not, then we cannot develop that kind of quality because God's being is like that: it is perfect. God never moves away from holiness. Whatever He does is always good because His being is perfect, absolute.

So if we want to be like Him, we must move in the direction and whatever the Holy Spirit shows to us and we can recognize it is in line with the moral perfection of God, we must make sure we obey straightaway.

We do not delay. We do not give excuses. We do not try to justify ourselves – worse still, we blame other people; we blame the circumstances; we blame our parents; we blame our country; we blame everyone else except ourselves. This is what often happens.

So if we want to properly develop in accordance with what is most meaningful in life, then we must appreciate the importance, the critical importance of walking by the Spirit.

If we want to live our lives well and fulfil God's call in our lives, we must decisively choose to love God with all our hearts and walk by the Spirit in all situations of life to fulfil the perfect will of God.

So this is something that all of us need to ponder, regularly, daily.

Let us not allow the world to capture our attention such that we turn away from this path.

This is life and if we do not abide in the path of life, death will come in and this has eternal consequences. The issues are very serious.

So let us ask God to help us to treat the matter seriously. Ask Him to help us to know what it means and how it works in our lives.

The Lord willing, we will consider further the practical living in this path of walking by the Spirit.

But today, I have sought to consider with you the meaning of walking by the Spirit: What does it mean? And if we understand it properly, it can then help us to move in the right way.

Let us then, as we come before the Lord, ask Him to search our hearts, help us understand ourselves, that we will not be afraid to face ourselves honestly.

Whatever is not good, let us ask Him to help us to give up and to destroy that. Whatever is good, let us thank the Lord for what He has done in us and ask Him to help us to build on it, to grow, to deepen.

And let us thank Him for the path that He has called us: a path of true freedom and meaning.

And let us thank Him that He was prepared to make available to us all that is necessary for us, even the event of the cross.

So let us thank the Lord Jesus for what He went through for our sake, so that through Him, we can find not only forgiveness, but life and power to become what we ought to be.